

**SUMMARY OF THE  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
JULY 12, 2000**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, July 12, 2000, at 1 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. William Ingersoll of the United States Navy. A list of action items resulting from this meeting is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to address action items identified at the Sixth NELAC Annual Meeting, including Appendix A (NELAC Assessor Basic Training Standard), Appendix B (NELAC Assessor Technical Training Standard), and assessment checklists.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Ingersoll thanked committee members for the outstanding team effort put forth at the recent Sixth NELAC Annual (NELAC VI) meeting in Williamsburg, VA. He regretfully informed the committee of Mr. R. Wayne Davis' resignation and suggested two possible replacements for Mr. Davis' voting position on the committee. After brief discussion of the prospective voting members, Mr. Ingersoll indicated that he would obtain resumes from the prospective members and distribute for committee review.

**ACTION ITEMS FROM NELAC VI**

- C     **Update of Quality Systems (QS) Assessment Checklist** - Ms. Mimi Uhlfelder expressed her willingness to assist Mr. Charles Dyer with the update of the QS checklist for consistency with the revised NELAC Standards.
  
- C     **Appendix A/Basic Assessor Training Subcommittee** - Dr. Margo Hunt of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Research and Development (ORD) joined the teleconference as an invited guest. She reported that the subcommittee to revise basic assessor training materials currently consists only of the subcommittee chair, Dr. Ken Jackson of the New York State Department of Health, and herself. It is Dr. Hunt's understanding that, since the committee has eliminated the word "course" from the NELAC On-site Assessment Standard (Chapter 3), the subcommittee's charge is to develop a Standard for basic training for NELAC assessors. The student materials from the pilot assessor training course will be reformatted and the instructor's manual will be eliminated. The subcommittee's work product will consist of the reformatted student materials and an outline of what needs to be covered in basic assessor training. Although the committee had indicated in the closing plenary session of the recent annual meeting that the course would be revised by October 15, 2000, Dr. Hunt indicated that it is more realistic to believe that the revision will be complete in time for committee discussion and input from the floor at the Sixth NELAC Interim (NELAC VII) meeting in November 2000. Dr. Hunt also indicated that she is awaiting communication from Dr. Jackson concerning the direction he would like to take on basic training. Mr. Ingersoll

noted that he had spoken with Dr. Jackson at the recent annual meeting and that Dr. Jackson indicated that he would be bringing in an experienced assessor from the New York State Department of Health to serve on the subcommittee. Dr. Jackson also indicated his intent to gear the course more toward an educational environment. Dr. Hunt sought input from the committee regarding shortening the basic assessor training course from five days to three days. In response, the committee noted that the course must strike a balance between covering all the necessary material and being feasible for assessors to attend.

- C Develop Process to Communicate Standard Clarification and Explanation** - The committee discussed ways in which stakeholders might ensure the nationally consistent interpretation and implementation of the NELAC Standards by NELAC assessors. It was suggested that NELAC adopt a process similar to that used by EPA's Office of Compliance for Good Laboratory Practices (GLPs) in which a numbered Regulation Advisory is issued whenever clarification is needed. The Regulation Advisory, with supporting documentation attached, sets a precedent for future users. An alternate suggestion was that an assessor forum be held at regular intervals so that NELAC assessors can get input from other assessors and arrive at some consensus opinion. It was generally agreed that consensus interpretation of the NELAC Standard would be the most practical means of clarification. It was also generally agreed that forum minutes documenting the consensus interpretation, perhaps in question and answer format, could then be referenced by assessors unable to attend the forum. There was extensive committee discussion and brainstorming of how such a forum might be implemented. Suggestions for implementation of a NELAC assessor forum, together with the potential stumbling block identified for each, are summarized as follows:

Suggestion 1 -	Assessor forum attached to NELAC meetings
Potential Stumbling Block -	A significant number of assessors do not attend NELAC meetings.
Suggestion 2 -	Electronic forum on NELAC Website
Potential Stumbling Block -	Many opinions, no resolution
Suggestion 3 -	Continuing education requirements for assessors to include attendance at a NELAC assessor forum every four years
Potential Stumbling Block -	Four years too long between forums
Suggestion 4 -	Annual regional forums for NELAC assessors
Potential Stumbling Block -	Too much work for NELAC committees hosting the forums
Suggestion 5 -	NELAC-sponsored assessor forum attached to annual Waste Testing and Quality Assurance (WTQA) Symposium as a double-incentive for assessor attendance (consensus-building forum and technical training)
Potential Stumbling Block -	WTQA instructors must be amenable to modifying courses to fit NELAC requirements

C **Appendix B - Technical Training Standards** - With the suggestion to couple a NELAC assessor forum with technical training, the committee transitioned to discussion of a possible strategy for developing Appendix B. Mr. Ingersoll noted that he has not yet received stakeholder feedback on the two approaches presented at NELAC VI for development of Appendix B. It was acknowledged that the committee has been struggling for a long time with the development of technical training courses for NELAC assessors. The committee's most recent intent has been to develop criteria for technical training and to allow the market to develop the courses. It was noted that this approach is somewhat dependent upon the number of states coming aboard as NELAC Accrediting Authorities. The approach could be cost-prohibitive if the market for training courses is not large enough. There was discussion of the merits of approaching analytical instrumentation and software manufacturers for input on technical training. Once again, committee members expressed the belief that appropriate training courses are already in existence and that the committee must set training criteria so that providers can tailor their existing courses to fit NELAC requirements. After moderate discussion of the issue, committee members agreed to contact selected vendors with whom they are familiar to ascertain whether the vendors would be willing to include an assessment module in their existing technical courses. It was also suggested that the customized assessment checklist used by the state of Florida and originally submitted to Ms. Marlene Moore could be incorporated into the criteria for technical training. Mr. Ingersoll will distribute this checklist to committee members for discussion at the next teleconference.

## CONCLUSION

The allotted time for the teleconference having expired, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. EDT. The committee's next meeting is scheduled for July 26, 2000, at 1 p.m. EDT via teleconference.

**ACTION ITEMS  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
JUNE 21, 2000**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Member</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	Mr. Ingersoll to obtain resumes of prospective voting members for distribution to committee.	W. Ingersoll	7/19/00
2.	Committee to review resumes of prospective voting members.	All	7/26/00
3.	Committee to update QS assessment checklist for consistency with June 2000 NELAC Standard.	M. Uhlfelder C. Dyer	Ongoing
4.	Committee to revise basic assessor training materials to reflect move from a training course to a training Standard.	Subcommittee chaired by K. Jackson	NELACVII
5.	Committee to contact analytical instrumentation/software vendors to evaluate their willingness to include an assessment module in their existing technical courses	D. Friedman (Perkin-Elmer) R. Buhl (Hewlett-Packard)	7/26/00
6.	Mr. Ingersoll to distribute Florida checklist to committee members for consideration in technical training criteria.	W. Ingersoll	7/26/00

**PARTICIPANTS  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
JUNE 21, 2000**

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